

CONSULTATION IN
A CASE OF ASTHMA (1672)

A CERTAIN rather young woman was afflicted from time to time with asthma so severe that she was in danger of suffocation. Although many medications were prescribed by her regular physician, the paroxysms kept returning and she requested me to see her. Since she did not have fever, I advised her to take the medicine which I have described on a previous page and which consists of turpentine, natural sulphur, and mustard seeds. Using this, she was immediately freed from the attack. When she took the medicine on another occasion, things did not turn out this well, perhaps because fluid was going down more strongly [into the chest]. At length, after the lapse of ten years during which she had asthma intermittently, she developed continued fever, with cough, difficulty in breathing, and expectoration. She died on the fourteenth day. When the body was dissected, the entire lung was found to be full of purulent matter and the substance of the lung was corrupted here and there by ulcers.

I do not know whether the asthma had gone over into inflammation of the lungs or whether the lung itself had been ulcerated by the downward flow of corrosive fluids and fever had been produced in this way, since I had not been called at the beginning of the illness. I was only summoned in consultation when things were getting worse.

Translated from Nicolas Chesneau: *Observationum Libri Quinque*. Paris, Leonard, 1672,
pp. 147-48.